

Crime in british society

Society



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ABSTRACT

The history of crime in Britain is inevitably dominated by the explosion of criminality in the last 30 years (Donohue, 1998). Research into the prevalence of crime rates in the UK has identified the nature of macroeconomic forces that fuel the crime rate and increase antisocial behavior among the youths (Goldson and Muncie, 2006). Among these forces are a growing number of the underclass, spread of youth gang culture and worklessness (Goldson, and Muncie, 2006). Clearly, there is much concern about the increasing criminalization of activities in the UK such that activities such as civil protest which were considered to be legitimate forms of dissent have been progressively criminalized (Bradford et al, 2009) as evident from the recent protests that resulted into the worst riots in decades.

This analysis will investigate and re-situate the explosion of criminality within the wider British society. In doing so, the analysis will raise, in applied form, critical issues in criminological theory hence contributing to these theoretical debates. Secondary research methodology will be chosen as the main method to investigating the level of crime and social deviance within the wider British society. The study will utilize official crime statistics as the data source. The researcher will analyze the findings obtained from the official statistics with those obtained from the various publications and scholarly journals which will be made available for use with survey and documentation analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Crime and the fear of crime are pervasive and endemic concerns in the modern contemporary society (Baldwin and Bottoms, 1976). Clearly, the criminal justice systems are failing to tackle these sensitive issues as evident in Britain where there is an alarming increase in the level of crime. There is evidence of higher and more sustained levels of youth crime and antisocial behavior (Munice, 2004). Whilst recognizing that the United Kingdom doesn't significantly experience worse crime than other countries, it appears that UK has suffered more intractable and higher levels of antisocial behavior than most countries in the whole of Western Europe (Munice, 2004). This is evident through increased media and political focus on the anti-social behavior and changes to the policy framework such as reducing the age of criminal responsibility to 10 (Munice, 2004).

Research into the prevalence of crime rates in the UK has identified the nature of macroeconomic forces that fuel the criminal activities and increase antisocial behavior among the youths (Goldson and Muncie, 2006). Among these forces are a growing number of the underclass, spread of youth gang culture and worklessness (Goldson, and Muncie, 2006). The term 'underclass' refers to those whose behaviour and attitude represent a threat to the wider society (MacDonald, 1997). Often, the concept of the underclass is related to trends of illegitimacy, unemployment and crime. It refers to a group that encounters multiple factors of social exclusion which often increases their chances of turning to illegal or deviant activities (MacDonald, 1997).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The history of crime in Britain is inevitably dominated by the explosion of criminality in the last 30 years (Donohue, 1998). In the first half of the twentieth century, the crime rate grew at a much more moderate rate, extending a slow pattern of growth since the 1870s. During the 1900 to 1914, the level of crime remained fairly constant. There, however, was an increase by 5% between 1915 and 1930 (Donohue, 1998). The increase was attributed to theft and breaking in-offences, reflecting the growth of larceny in a more affluent society (Donohue, 1998). Over the past few years, there has been an alarming rise in the level of crime in the British society. The yearly figures for indictable /serious crimes recorded in England and Wales rose from 100, 000 in the early 1900 to 300, 000 in the late 1930s (Donohue, 1998).

Subsequently, there was a notable increase to half a million in the mid-1950s and two million by the mid-1970s (Bailey, 2011). During the early 1980's, the upward trend of crime accelerated to a figure of three- and -a- quarter million (Bailey, 2011). Since then, the rate has been on the rise with a vast majority of indictable crimes being offences against property, theft and burglary. Violent and sexual offences, despite receiving most publicity, have generally accounted for only 5% of all crime according to the official statistics (Bailey, 2011).

There is much concern about the increasing criminalization of activities in the UK such that activities such as civil protest which were considered to be legitimate forms of dissent have been progressively criminalized (Bradford et al, 2009). This is evident in Britain, where most recently, London was rocked

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by the worst riots in decades (Bailey, 2011). The riots that made headlines around the world were sparked by a fatal shooting of a man by the police (Bailey, 2011). From what can be discerned, crime is deeply rooted within the wider British society.

In order to reduce the level of crime, it becomes necessary to investigate and situate criminal activities and to determine the factors influencing the rise in crime and federal underclass in the wider society. This proposal thus seeks to investigate and re-situate the explosion of criminality within the wider British society. In doing so, the analysis will raise, in applied form, critical issues in criminological theory hence contributing to these theoretical debates.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this proposed research is to inquire into the level of crime and the extent of deviance in the British society. As a result the following are the research objectives

- To investigate the level of crime and social deviance in the British society
- To identify the sections of the British society that are criminal
- To determine the causative factors leading to the rise in the level of crime in the British society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When discussing about crime, different types of deviance come into mind. These include: Conflict or violent crimes, drug taking crime nexus, Burglary, sexual offences and assault, mugging, theft, and human trafficking among others (Flatley et al, 2010). While studying deviance, it is crucial to recognize <https://assignbuster.com/crime-in-british-society/>

that significant shifts have been made in the past. The most important change involves the movement of an act from criminal status to non-criminal status.

In the early 1960's and 1970's, certain activities were decriminalized, in particular abortion, soft-drug use and homosexuality (Flatley et al, 2010). These changes in law undoubtedly made some differences as abortion is now available in a much wider range of situations than prior to the 1967 Abortion Act (Flatley et al, 2010). Homosexuality is no longer outlawed as it was prior to the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, while the penalties for soft drug possession have been reduced considerably since the mid-1960s (Flatley et al, 2010). Hence, it is important to recognize that not all deviant behaviour is considered criminal. In analyzing crime in Britain, we will consider activities deemed unlawful and that outrage and pose a threat to the general public.

According to a study by Brantingham and Brantingham (1991) on environmental criminology, there are four dimensions to any crime. These are: the law, the offender, the target and the location. The study suggests the use of place based prevention strategies in combating crime. These strategies focus on the crime site, that is, the crime location and the spatial aspects of the target. Indeed, it is important to recognize that there are "hot spots" and that crime is not randomly distributed. Identifying such "hot spots" is a sure way to combating criminality in Britain hence the purpose of this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research design will be based on the following research questions

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To what extent is crime prevalent within the wider British society

Are large sections of the British society criminal

What are the factors influencing the rise in crime and Britain's federal underclass since the 1980s

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SECONDARY RESEARCH

The primary objective of this analysis is to investigate the level of crime and social deviance within the wider British society. In order to gain a broader depth of analysis on the subject area, secondary data sources will be employed as the main method of data collection and analysis. Secondary sources of information are fast, inexpensive, provide bases for comparison and often yield more accurate data than that obtained through primary research (Shell, 1997).

Given that the data has already been collected, the researcher won't have to devote resources to this phase of research hence becoming cheaper and saving a huge amount of time. Although secondary data would be costly to purchase, the cost is certainly lower than generally would be the case in the field. Also, the interpretation and analyses of secondary data is much easier as compared to the primary data. Hence acquiring secondary data will be more convenient in this analysis

RESEARCH STRATEGY

An important part of the strategy will be to ensure the availability and easy retrieval of the relevant data, given the vast amount of secondary data. This

is important because archived secondary data are usually very large and retrieving the relevant information can be time consuming (Shell, 1997). Metasearch programs such as Copernic can be used in obtaining the relevant information. Metasearch programs send a search request to various search engines and then compile the results in one list and sort them on the basis of their estimated relevance (Shell, 1997). This search strategy will be useful in obtaining the particular data to address the specific research questions hence saving a huge amount of time for discussion and analysis section.

DATA COLLECTION

This study will utilize official crime statistics derived from two different sources of information. First, from crimes reported to and recorded by the police; and, secondly, from a self-report victimization survey, the British Crime Survey, which is conducted by the Home office annually. In each wave of the British Crime Survey, a representative sample of nearly 40,000 respondents in Wales and England are questioned with regard to their experiences of crime over the past 12 months (Dodd et al, 2004).

The need for both of these data sources is reflected in the strengths and weaknesses of each set. For example, only 42% of crimes committed in Wales and England are reported to the police and subsequently 74% of these reported crimes is recorded (Dodd et al, 2004). It therefore follows that only 31% of all crimes committed in England and Wales are represented in the police recorded crime data (Dodd et al, 2004).

In overcoming the inadequacies and biases derived from police recorded crime data, victimization surveys are used where a sample of the general

population is probed about crimes committed against them, (whether or not reported to the police) (Dodd et al, 2004). The BCS certainly provide a much closer reflection to reality than the court statistics and statistics of offences recorded by the police (Dodd et al, 2004). It is therefore used partly to provide a more accurate estimate of the level of crime including those that go unreported. On the other hand, the Recorded Crime Data provides a greater level of precision regarding the time and the specific location of crime (Bradford et al, 2009)

DATA ANALYSIS

The BCS results are often published in a variety of specialized reports and made available online at the Home office website ([http://www. homeof? ce. gov. uk/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/)) while the complete datasets of primary data can be obtained for secondary analysis from the UK data archive which is based at the University of Sussex (<http://www. data-archive. ac. uk/>) (Gilling and Pierpoint, 1999). The researcher will analyze the findings obtained from the official statistics with those obtained from the various publications and scholarly journals such as the British Journal of Criminology, Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology, Journal of Criminal Justice, Police Quarterly, and Internet Journal of Criminology among others. These publications will be made available for use with Survey and Documentation Analysis.

RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND GENERALIZABILITY

In undertaking this research, it will be necessary to evaluate the quality, legitimacy, accuracy and reliability of the data. Since official statistics are a set of discretionary procedures and institutional practices, the question of

validity and reliability comes into focus. (Seddon, 2005) argues that their compilation is dependent on two criteria which may influence their reliability and validity. That is, the format can be influenced by the culture and instruction and later by governmental policies or the police. Hence, in improving on the reliability and validity, I will utilize various publications by other experts in the field of criminology and scholarly journals outlined above.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While our analysis on the level of crime will be derived from the official statistics, the figure will not necessarily give an accurate reflection of the reality. Criticism has been made on grounds of an exaggerated figure.

Radical sociologists tend to believe that law is a class law; hence, they argue that it is not surprising to find a disproportionate number of the working class appearing in the crime statistics (Gabriel and Greve, 2003). It therefore follows that the official statistics on crime is biased and limited. That is, they over represent the contribution by the lower class to 'conventional' crimes and fail to reveal the extent of governmental and corporate crime as well as crimes committed by the agents of social control, especially the police (Gabriel and Greve, 2003). Nevertheless, this study will utilize the findings obtained from the official statistics.

CONCLUSION

This research will situate the crime zone areas in the British society and identify the factors influencing the rise in crime and Britain's federal underclass since the 1980s thereby making it easier to stamp out criminality

within the UK. Also, this analysis will significantly contribute to theoretical debates on criminology. With the above taken into account, it can be concluded that this research is of paramount importance.

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